



La Voz

**Newsletter of the National Organization of Professional Hispanic Natural
Resources Conservation Service Employees**

November, 2005

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**President's Message by
Bertha Venegas**

President's Message



Greetings Everyone! We begin our new fiscal year weathering a number of disasters that have plagued our country recently. The State of Texas took in more than half of the people displaced from Katrina and then Rita came along and battered parts of Texas. Wilma followed right behind and battered parts of Florida. As our country recovers from the devastations left behind let us be thankful for all that we have and remember to do our part in helping those affected by these disasters.

The planning of our 2006 National Conference is well underway. We are working with the Rosen Centre Hotel in Orlando to host our conference July 24-28, 2006 pending approval from headquarters. Be watching for updates in the coming newsletters for additional information on the conference.

Every year our agency looks at ways to streamline and work with a reduced budget. We must look at how to collaborate and utilize our resources more efficiently. I have been in contact with the other employee organizations and we have been in discussions on the need to meet together and share resources. The American Indian and Alaska Native Employee Association (AIANE) and the Asian Pacific Islander Organization (APIO) will be meeting together in 06. There is talk to meet in Arizona in 2007 and Washington D.C. in 2008. I would like some feedback from membership on the idea of meeting in conjunction with other employee organizations. I can be contacted via email, bvenegas@gvtc.com, or bertha.venegas@tx.usda.gov.

Congratulations to Adolfo Perez who was selected State Conservationist in Wyoming, Homer Sanchez, Rangeland Management Specialist for the Grazing Lands Team of the Central National Technology Support Center, Michael Gonzales, Program Coordinator, under the Deputy Chief of Programs, Washington, D.C. and Carlos Suarez, Deputy State Conservationist, California.

With the holidays fast approaching, remember to spend some time with family and friends enjoying Thanksgiving.

Bertha T. Venegas

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Personnel Update

Bertha Venegas, President

Adolfo Perez – State Conservationist – Wyoming

Michael Gonzales – Program Coordinator, Deputy Chief of Programs

Homer Sanchez – Rangeland Management Specialist – National Technical Center, Fort Worth

Carlos Suarez – Deputy State Conservationist – California

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NOPHNRCSE Committee Chairs

Lori Valadez, Conference Planning Chairperson

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NOPHNRCSE Caribbean Job Fair Report

Carlos E. Morganti, Caribbean Area Representative

As part of the outreach program of NRCS a group of NOPHNRCSE members participated in a job fair held at the University of Puerto Rico at Mayaguez on October 7-8, 2005. Work and internship opportunities in the USDA-NRCS were presented to students from the Departments of Civil Engineering and Agriculture. Information on NRCS careers, Earth Team volunteer program and professional organizations were also provided to the students.

NOPHNRCSE member and National HEPM, Gilbert Guerrero was the NRCS leader for this activity. Manuel Matos, Soil Scientist from North Dakota, Carlos E. Hernandez, HEPM for the Caribbean Area, Edwin Muñiz, HEPM from the state of New Jersey and also NOPHNRCSE Eastern Region Representative, Rafael Ricuarte, HEPM from the state of Nebraska and Carlos E. Morganti, NOPHNRCSE Regional Representative for the Caribbean Area participated in activity. All of them are active NOPHNRCSE members from different regions of the country.

Heydsha Cordero, Earth Team Volunteer for the Plant Materials and Grazinglands Office in Puerto Rico assisted the group in the distribution of written NRCS Careers information to the students. A total of 60 students were interviewed by the NRCS group and more than 3,000 visited the NRCS exhibit to learn more about the Agency.



From left to right: Manuel Matos, Rafael Ricuarte, Carlos Hernandez, Heydsha Cordero, Edwim Muñiz and Carlos E. Morganti.

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Sharing our Story with Others

Julie MacSwain, Communications Chair

NOPHNRCSE has an opportunity to share several stories with others. NRCS has several ways in which stories can be told. Often times stories are not shared with others as no one took the time and initiative to write up the story line!

We have many stories that can be told about the role Hispanics play in agriculture. We have many ways in which we can tell our story with others. A few examples include NRCS Today, Volunteer Voice and local news media just to name a few. If you should have questions about how to tell the story, consider making a contact with your state public affairs specialist.

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Thanksgiving in 1541

According to Texans, the real first Thanksgiving in the United States occurred in 1541.

Where is the site of the first real thanksgiving?
Palo Duro State Park near Amarillo, Texas.

When was the first Thanksgiving in the United States?
Some Texans disagree with the traditional Pilgrims' date of 1621 and instead set the date for the first Thanksgiving in the United States as May 9, 1541, at the base of what is now known as the Palo Duro State Park of Texas near Amarillo.

Francisco Vasquez de Coronado and his expedition traveled eastward along the high plains of Texas, encountering the unfriendly Tiguex tribes of upper New Mexico. The expedition lost a large number of horses, men and supplies in their hasty retreat from the non-friendly tribes. The heat and the lack of shade trees made their journey quite unbearable and the loss of supplies and water was taking its toll on the remainder of the expedition. The situation was desperate.

Coronado's journal records that on May 8, 1541 they came upon a large hole in the ground which appeared all of a sudden before them as if to swallow the earth. From the edge of the canyon, the Spaniards killed some wild game, probably a deer, and feasted on it. The following morning, May 9, 1541, Coronado ordered one of his accompanying priests to say a mass of thanksgiving for having been spared. This became the first Thanksgiving of record in the United States, 80 years prior to the Pilgrims.

Source: Francisco Vásquez de Coronado's Journal

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Food Connection with Texas Indians

What was the unusual food that Fray Espinosa said was one of their most delicious dishes in times of famine? Crow

What were the foods regularly given to mission Indians? Corn, meat, tobacco, beans, and brown sugar.

Fray Isidro Feliz de Espinosa wrote, "During the years 1717 and 1718, because of the severity of the drought, the harvest of corn and beans among the Indians was very poor. Since we usually received some provisions from the natives, it was inevitable that when they themselves suffered want, we too should feel the pangs of hunger. Many a day dawned when we had absolutely nothing to eat on hand."

"It occurred to one of the fathers that possibly the flesh of the crow might after all furnish us a meal... With the use of a gun, surely, we should be able to feast on meat every day. True, the color, flavor and toughness of this meat was quite repugnant, but hunger made it so appetizing that for the greater part of the year crow's meat was one of our most delicious dishes."

In 1758 Governor Jacinto Barrios described the food issued to the Indians at Mission San José. "Every week seven beefs are slaughtered to provide the Indians with meat. Those who are sick receive chicken and the mutton of Lambs. Each Sunday the missionary doles out to each Indian one peck of corn, a slab of meat and some tobacco. On Thursdays he distributes among them beans, brown sugar bars and more corn to those who need it."

Source: *Texas Women's Hall of Fame Cookbook, 1986*

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Tips for Dealing with Harassment

Sharyn C. Alvarez, National FWPM

If you are a manager/supervisor

Think ahead, your goal is to prevent sexual harassment and stop the inappropriate behavior before it becomes a complaint. You should use your power fairly, for business purposes and not for personal gain.

- Understand and commit to the agency's policy
- Ensure that your employees understand the policy and are aware of their roles and rights

- Provide AND support sexual harassment training
- Be prepared to adequately respond to challenges
- Your power should be used fairly and only for business purposes
- And ensure that your behavior is beyond reproach

If you are an employee

If you are mocked, teased, bullied or harassed, speak up. Confront the person and tell them you don't appreciate their behavior and you want it to stop. If it does not, talk to your supervisor, if that doesn't work talk to your next level in the chain of command. You don't have to put up with this behavior.

If you witness it, speak up. No one should have to work in an environment of harassment. If you witness bullying, mocking, harassment sexual or non-sexual, speak up. Don't stand by and let the offensive behavior go unchallenged. Simply say it's not funny to laugh at, make fun of or tease and you don't appreciate it.

When you are away from the office

Remember, harassment incidents are not limited to the employee's office or primary work locations. At conferences and planning meetings, the workplace might be a hotel or resort. A restaurant can be the workplace for lunch or dinner meetings. When a supervisor, manager and employees attend a party or backyard BBQ an employee's home may become the workplace.

Manager, supervisors and employees need to be aware that wherever we go with each other, we need to continue to support and uphold the sexual harassment policies of our organization.

When offenders try to justify their behavior

When people who harass, bully or mock others try to justify their offensive behavior, be prepared to respond. There are people who will never behave professionally. You don't have to put up with it.

You may hear comments of reverse discrimination, how touchy everyone is, or remarks of how sensitive people are these days. The question is what will you say? Will you remain silent, or will you take this opportunity to state calmly, logically but firmly that the harassing comment and behavior will not be tolerated.

You can say that freedom and freedom of speech was never intended to give one person the right to hurt another person. When we accepted the offer to work at NRCS, we did it voluntarily. Part of taking a job is agreeing to do the assigned work and follow the rules of the organization. One of the rules is that discrimination and sexual harassment will not be condoned.

You can also say, NRCS hires employees to perform a variety of tasks. We are administrative, technical, professional, and clerical, we are volunteers, we are students, contractors and customers and we are of all grade levels. None of us were hired to be abused.

For more information

Contact your state Federal Women's Program Manager or Sharyn C. Alvarez, National Federal Women's Program Manager at 301-504-2338.

Bibliography

Deblieux, Mike, "Stopping Sexual Harassment Before It Starts, America Media Publishing.

USDA-NRCS, "Preventing Sexual Harassment, A Self-Study Guide"

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Mark your Calendar for the 2006 NOPHNCSE Conference!

Julie MacSwain, Communications, Chairperson

It's time to mark your calendar for next year's 2006 NOPHNCSE Conference! The 2006 Conference will take place at the Rosen Centre Hotel in Orlando, Florida the week of July 24, 2006. The conference motel is just minutes from the Orange County Convention Center, Orlando International Airport and yes, Sea World, Universal Studios and Walt Disney World!

If you have interest in assisting with the planning and successful implementation of next year's conference, please contact, Lori Valadez. Lori can be reached via phone at (406)-587-6842 or at lori.valadez@mt.usda.gov

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2006 International Poultry Exposition

Jose Pagan, Partnership Committee Chair

2006 International Poultry Exposition

The 58th International Poultry Exposition will be held in Atlanta, Georgia, January 25-27, 2006. Exhibitors will showcase their products and services on 16 acres inside the Georgia World Congress Center. The Poultry Water Quality Consortium, a partnership between EPA, NRCS, TVA and U.S. Poultry and Egg Association for promoting water quality in the poultry industry, will have an exhibit booth on this matter at the show. The exhibit focuses on management of poultry mortality, manure and litter management, nutrient management, and wastewater management. This exhibit will be located in the new North side Drive entrance of the Center. This building is the Phase 1V expansion or Building C whose lobby is over 1000 feet long, 80 feet wide and over 90 feet high, making it large enough to house the Titanic, if it was available. This is a tremendous opportunity for NOPHNRCSE members to observe new technology in the poultry industry. Educational programs featuring cutting-edge topics will be held on Thursday, January 26. For more information on the EXPO and U.S. Poultry and Egg Association you may check out their website at www.poultryegg.org. Employees who are fluent in Spanish, who work with poultry producers are needed to staff this booth, as well as individuals fluent in other languages, since there are generally over 4,000 foreign visitors.

In the past, Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Louisiana, Georgia, Mississippi, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Kentucky, Texas and Tennessee NRCS State Conservationists' and the Director of the Caribbean Area have been very supportive of this effort. Individuals that have assisted included: Engineers, District Conservationists, Field Operation Assistants, Soil Conservationists, RC&D Coordinators, Technicians, Regional Office Staff, State Office Staff, and District Employees. **Attendance to the show has to be financed by the employee's home state.**

The 2005 International Poultry Exposition, the largest such poultry event in the world, served as a meeting place for 880 exhibitors and approximately 19,173 attendees from 49 states, Puerto Rico, Washington, DC and 89 countries. Individuals interested in helping staff the Consortium's booth must get approval from their State Office and submit their names to Jose Pagan, NRCS contact for booth staff, no later than January 4, 2006 so they can be registered with the Exposition. If you have any questions contact Jose Pagan, Partnership Committee Chair, at (770)267-8363 x3, e-mail jose.pagan@ga.usda.gov.

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